



Bhakti, Mukti and Parama Puruśa

The subject of today's discourse is "Bhakti, Mukti and Parama Puruśa". [The existence of] living beings, and especially of human beings, is based on four principles, four fundamentals: physical; physico-psychic; psychic and psycho-spiritual; and pure spiritual. These four strata are known as caturvarga in Sanskrit. But human endeavours and human expressions are trifarious. Existence itself is based on the fourth one, that is, the spiritual one, so there cannot be any expression in that stratum.

And in all those three strata where human endeavour functions, there are several bondages. Those bondages are personal, spatial and temporal. From the very dawn of human civilization, human beings have been trying to get liberation or emancipation from these bondages. And whenever they could solve a particular problem or a particular bondage, partially or temporarily, they called it artha. And when they liberated themselves permanently, they called it Paramārtha.

Now, this liberation from temporal, spatial and personal bondages in the three spheres [or strata - physical, physico-psychic and psychic/psycho-spiritual] is [known] as artha. Human beings tried to liberate themselves with this artha, [but certainly that liberation was never perfect]. Only liberation in the spiritual stratum can be of permanent nature, hence it is called Paramārtha. One can get mukti from the first three bondages, but never vimukti. Vimukti is liberation of permanent nature.

Now let us see how humanity functions in these three strata.

The first bondage is the bondage in the physical stratum. You are hungry - you want food. Food gives you temporary liberation from the bondage of hunger. You purchase food with the help of money. So in this

case money is your temporary liberator; so money is called artha in Sanskrit.

Suppose you do not know the meaning of a particular word. You consulted a learned man and you got a reply. Your mental thirst was temporarily quenched; your hunger was temporarily satisfied. So “meaning” is also known as artha in Sanskrit. Artha is temporary liberation, temporarily liberating you from your psychic hunger or psychic thirst. But “money” in the sense of artha, or “meaning” in the sense of artha, cannot grant you permanent liberation.

But in the spiritual sphere - What is spiritual bondage? Spiritual bondage is: You are one with the Supreme Entity. The Supreme Entity is always with you, and you are always with Him. You should have this realization permanently, but you lack this realization. Your lacking in this realization is your spiritual bondage. And when by dint of your sádhaná, your devotion, your self-sacrifice, you get that realization permanently, then you have got what is known as Paramártha - not artha, but Paramártha.

So human existence is based on four fundamentals, but human endeavours are trifarious. These four spheres are physical; then physico-psychic; psychic and psycho-spiritual; and spiritual. The first one is known in Sanskrit as káma, the second one is known as artha, the third one is known as dharma, and the fourth is known as mokśa, mokśa [giving Vedic and Tantric pronunciations]. Emancipation means liberation from these three bondages. Now, how are you to liberate yourself? There are mainly three approaches: jinána, karma and bhakti.(1)

Jinánam. A jinánii [person of knowledge] will say, Satyam̐ jinánam anantam̐ Brahma - “Parama Puruśa, the supreme goal, is the absolute truth, and He is infinite.” You are to be one with Him. When someone instructs you, “Be one with Him,” it is simply a [theory]. How can you be one with Him? What is the practical approach? What should be the practical course? The jinániis have nothing to say in this respect. They cannot give you practical guidance, though it is a fact that Satyam̐ jinánam anantam̐ Brahma.

Then karmiis [persons of action] will say, Karma Brahmaeti karma bahukurviita - “Look upon karma as Brahma and do as much karma as possible.” But how do you look upon karma as Brahma? There was no reply.

Then the bhaktas [devotees], what do the bhaktas say? They say:

Bhaktir Bhagavato sevá bhaktih prema svarúpiíi;

Bhaktiránanda rúpá ca bhakti bhaktasya jivanam.

[Bhakti is service to God; bhakti is the form taken by divine love; bhakti is the embodiment of bliss; bhakti is the life of the devotee.]

You know, the jinániis are simply theoreticians, and in the final phase of their karma, the karmiis are also theoreticians. That's why the well known jinána márgii [follower of the path of jinána] of India, Sri Shankaracharya, said, Mokśakárañasamagryám bhaktireva gariiyasii - "Amongst all the ways and approaches to mokśa, bhakti is the best."

Now, what do the bhaktas say? Bhaktir Bhagavato sevá ["Bhakti is service to God"]. There are two gentlemen, Mr. X and Mr. Y. Now how can Mr. X come in close contact with Mr. Y? "Oh, Mr. X, ásálám válekum." "Válekum sálám."(2) But do they come in close contact? Or do they keep a gentleman's gap? Certainly they are maintaining a gentleman's gap; but in case of Bhágavata sevá, when you are doing sevá you come in closest contact. Is it not a fact?

The bhakta says, Bhaktir Bhagavato sevá bhaktih premasvarúpiíi - "Bhakti is prema personified." What is prema? In this universe each and every object attracts all other objects. And by this mutual attraction, the balance of the entire universe is properly maintained - the equilibrium is maintained, the equipoise is maintained. So this attraction is natural for all created beings, animate or inanimate. Attraction is natural; repulsion is not natural. Repulsion is negative attraction, but attraction is not negative repulsion. Now, the attraction of a particular created being for another finite object is called káma, and one's attraction for the Infinite Entity is called prema.

Samyaunmasrnito svánto mamatvátishayánkitah;

Bhávah sa eva sándrátma budhaeh premah nigadyate.

[That whereby one's own identity is lost, whereby intense mamatá (mine-ness) is imprinted on the mind, and which causes a bháva (mental stance or attitude) that is soft and pleasing to the soul, is called prema by scholars.]

So this is prema. And for a bhakta? Bhaktipremasvarúpiíi. For a bhakta, "bhakti is prema personified."

Bhakti is the spirit of prema.

Bhaktiránanda rúpá ca. And you know ánandam [bliss]. When one comes in contact with another object and after coming in contact with that object a sympathetic psychic vibration is created, and that sympathetic psychic vibration maintains a parallelism with the physical vibration of that object, then we say it is sukham [pleasure, happiness]. And when the psychic vibration of a person cannot maintain parallelism with the physical vibration of that object, then we say it is dukkham [pain, sorrow]. Suppose a gentleman comes in contact with a rose. And after coming in contact with that rose, a vibration is created in the mind of the gentleman, and when that vibration maintains parallelism with the physical wave, light waves and other waves of that rose, then we say the gentleman is feeling sukha. And suppose you come in contact with a decomposed dead body. A certain mental vibration is created, and if your mental vibration cannot maintain parallelism with the physical vibration of that decomposed dead body, then we say you are feeling dukkha. This is the difference between sukha and dukkha. And when the wavelength of sukha, the wavelength of the sympathetic vibration, becomes almost infinite, that is, becomes straightened just like a straight line, then it is sukham anantam [endless happiness]. It is ánandam. So, Bhaktiránanda rúpá ca - "Bhakti is ánanda personified."

Bhakti bhaktasya jiiivanam - "and for a bhakta, bhakti and his life, his vitality, his vital energy, his very existence, are inseparable." If suppose a robber, a dacoit, says, "Oh, bhakta, I want, I'll take, your bhakti!" the bhakta will say, "You better take my life! Let me keep my bhakti." Bhakti bhaktasya jiiivanam. So that's why it has been said, Mokśa káraṇasamagryám bhaktireva gariiyasii.

Now, when one lacks proper [culture] one distorts the very spirit of his or her psychic object. Bhakti is closely associated with prema. So, there can be bhakti only for the Supreme, for prema is always for the Infinite; so bhakti can only be for the Infinite. But there can be distortions. When one wants money from Parama Puruśa one says, "O Parama Puruśa, I am Your devotee." No, [that person] is not His devotee! Because he or she does not want Parama Puruśa, he or she wants money from Parama Puruśa. "O Parama Puruśa, I'm Your devotee. I have got a girl of marriageable age, I want a groom. I don't want to spend a farthing." Is he a bhakta? No, no, no. Now, there have been distortions. These are all distortions of bhakti.

That's why it has been said that these are all aparábhakti. When one wants something else from Parama Puruśa other than Parama Puruśa, then that bhakti is called aparábhakti, and when one wants Parama Puruśa from Parama Puruśa, then that bhakti is parábhakti.

The bhaktas say: Suppose Parama Puruśa appears before you and says, “O my boy, do you want something from Me?” then what should be your reply? Your reply will be, “What I require and what I do not require is best known to You. You know better than I do. So You do according to my requirements. I won’t say anything.” But if even then He says, “O my boy, say something, try to get something. Ask something, say something. I want that you yourself say, ‘O Parama Puruśa, I want this thing or that thing’” - in that case you should say, “O Parama Puruśa, give me parābhakti.” Or you should say, “O Parama Puruśa, give me shuddhá buddhi.”

Shuddhá buddhi means “benevolent intellect”. That is, the intellect should always be associated with benevolence. If it is not associated with benevolence, then that particular person will be worse than an animal. Nobody can check his or her degradation. And when the bhakta has shuddhá buddhi, benevolent intellect, he or she will certainly acquire parābhakti. Wherever there is shuddhá buddhi, there must be parābhakti, and wherever there is parābhakti there must be shuddhá buddhi. So you should remember that bhaktas are very [intelligent] and jñāniis are [foolish].

There are three classifications within aparābhakti. When a so-called devotee (aparābhakti means they are not devotees, they are so-called devotees) says, “O Parama Puruśa, I am Your devotee,” and then says, “X is my enemy. Please kill him, please kill him!” this type of bhakti is called tāmasika bhakti. Actually it is not bhakti. When someone says, “O Parama Puruśa, I am Your devotee, but You know, I am not getting any employment, please arrange for my employment,” he is not trying to harm anybody, but he wants physical development or physical elevation, his [physical] betterment. His bhakti, his so-called bhakti, is known as rājasika bhakti. And that is also aparābhakti, and aparābhakti is not bhakti. And suppose someone says, “O Parama Puruśa, I am Your devotee, and You know, I want mukti, I want mukti,” and Parama Puruśa asks, “O my boy, why do you want mukti?” “Oh, I don’t find any charm in this world, because I lost my digestive power. Either give me back my digestive power or give me mukti.” This is sāttvikī bhakti. Actually sāttvikī bhakti is not bhakti; aparābhakti is not at all bhakti.

What is bhakti? Parābhakti is bhakti. So when you are asked by Parama Puruśa for the second time, “What do you want?” You should say, “I want parābhakti or shuddhá buddhi.” And what is parābhakti? “O Parama Puruśa, You know whether I am Your devotee or not. It is You who are to judge whether I am Your devotee or not - but I want You.” The child says, “O mother, I don’t want any toys from you, I want you.”

So, “I want You. And why do I want You? Because I want to serve You.” And, “O my boy, why do you want

to serve Me?" "Because I get pleasure in serving You; that's why I want to serve You." This is parábhakti.

But this is not the highest phase of parábhakti. In the highest phase, when asked by Parama Puruśa, "O my boy, why do You want to serve Me?" the reply should be, "By serving You I want to give You pleasure. That's why I want to serve You. I don't want to enjoy pleasure." This is the highest phase of parábhakti. This is what bhaktas say. And jñānīs maintain a gentleman's gap. Now have you understood everything?

A devotee who has developed parábhakti develops a family relationship with the Supreme. And the bhaktas who have developed parábhakti are of three categories: A-category, B-category and C-category. A-category is the highest order.

C-category: When asked by anybody they will say, "You know, Parama Puruśa belongs to me." "Why? Why does He belong to you?" "You know, Parama Puruśa belongs to all, and I am also a part of all, so certainly He belongs to me. Since He belongs to all, then certainly He belongs to me also. I am also included within the scope of A-L-L." They are of C-grade. They have developed parábhakti, but they are C-category.

And the B-category bhakta will say, "Yes, Parama Puruśa belongs to me." "Why? Why does He belong to you?" "He belongs to me; He is my personal property. He belongs to me, but because He belongs to me, He belongs to others also." That is, C-category bhaktas say, "He belongs to all, that's why He belongs to me." B-category bhaktas say, "He belongs to me, and His relationship is with me. He has the same relationship with others as He has got with me. So He belongs to me, and He belongs to others also." They are of B-category.

And the devotees of A-category will say, "He belongs to me. He is my personal property. He belongs to nobody else."

So for the devotee of the highest order, Parama Puruśa is his or her personal property, and the notion of sharing with others does not arise.

Now, through bhakti one can come in closest contact with the Supreme. So an intelligent person is to develop bhakti. One may or may not have jñāna, one may or may not have karma, but one must have bhakti.

Bhakti bhaktasya jivanam. This portion is very important. You know, jinána is a practice. Karma is also a practice. But bhakti is not a practice, it is a principle. It is something quite natural, and naturally associated with your life. So, when one becomes a [bhakta], one becomes natural in one's mode of life.

In all the bhakti shástras [devotional scriptures] you will see that people do not criticize others. Whatever they have to say, they say regarding Parama Puruśa, regarding their goal, regarding their desideratum. And you know, with this little human brain and little human intellect, it is not at all possible for a person to fight against Paramá Prakrti, to fight against the binding principle. For this one must get special favour, special help, from Parama Puruśa, otherwise it is not at all possible - not "difficult", but rather "not at all possible" - for a person to fight against Paramá Prakrti, to fight against Mahámáyá.

But when one ensconces oneself in Parama Puruśa, surrenders at the altar of Parama Puruśa, it becomes a very easy job for him or her. And while surrendering oneself at the altar of the Supreme, what is one to do? One must not ask for anything from Parama Puruśa. [For example,] for a bhakta, mukti has got no importance. A bhakta wants Parama Puruśa, and nothing from Him, not even mukti. Suppose Parama Puruśa says, "O devotee, what do you want?" - his or her reply is, "I want You." One must not say, "I want mukti," because suppose one says, "I want mukti," one may get mukti, but one may not get Parama Puruśa. Which is more valuable - mukti or Parama Puruśa? Parama Puruśa!

In támasika aparábhakti: "O Parama Puruśa, that man is my enemy, Mr. X. Kill him." In that case, Parama Puruśa may or may not kill that Mr. X. But it is sure that one will not get Parama Puruśa, because one did not say, "O Parama Puruśa, I want You." In rájasika bhakti one says, "O Parama Puruśa, I want a job." One may get it. One may or may not get a job; it depends upon the sweet will of Parama Puruśa. But it is sure that one will not get Parama Puruśa, because one did not say, "O Parama Puruśa, I want You." In sáttvikii bhakti also one may get back one's digestive power [laughter], but one may not, will not, get Parama Puruśa because one did not say, "O Parama Puruśa, I want You." So for a bhakta, for a devotee, Parama Puruśa is more important than mukti.

Now, when one is in closest contact with Parama Puruśa, one becomes Parama Puruśa. Brahma vid Brahmaeva bhavati ["The knower of Brahma will become Brahma"]. So under such circumstances mukti has got no meaning, no importance. And with the help of Parama Puruśa, it will be a very easy job for one to liberate oneself from the binding influence, from the binding faculties of Paramá Prakrti.

Lord Krśná openly said,

*Daevii hyeśá guñamayii mama Máyá duratyayá;
Mámeva ye prapadyante Máyámetám taranti te.(3)*

“This Máyá is a very strong power. For a unit being it is very difficult to fight this Máyá. She is insurmountable. But those who have taken shelter in me can easily fight against this Máyá.”

And I already told you that in the case of a bhakta, in a bhakta’s life, his or her relationship with Parama Puruśa is just like a family relationship. For a bhakta, unlike for a jinánii or a karmii, He is not a magistrate or a judge; He is the family father. And so a bhakta must not think - and a bhakta never thinks - that he or she is a pápii [sinner] or was a pápii, because it is a family relationship. In a court of law one may maintain that one is a criminal, but so far as the relationship with Parama Puruśa is concerned, it is purely a family relationship.

And that’s why each and every sádharma, each and every spiritual aspirant, must remember that he or she must not have any inferiority complex in coming in contact with Parama Puruśa. Parama Puruśa is one’s personal property.

Lord Krśńa said,

*Api cet sudurácáro bhajate mámananyabhák;
Sopi pápavinirmuktah mucyate bhavabandhanát.*

“If even a sudurácárii, that is, a sinner of worst degree, ideates on Me - that is, if a sinner withdraws his or her mind from all other objects and guides that mind, those collective propensities, unto Me - I assure him or her that he or she must get mukti; he or she must get everything.”

So in the realm of spirituality a sádharma must not suffer, must not entertain, any inferiority complex. You are all His loving sons, His loving daughters. You are sure to get Him; it is your birthright to be one with Him.

Footnotes

(1) Jinána, karma and bhakti are forms of spiritual practice which emphasize, respectively, discrimination, selfless action, and devotion. -Eds.

(2) A Muslim exchange of greetings. -Eds.

(3) Bhagavad Giitá. -Trans.

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